

Parent handbook;
A guide to post—treatment ©

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Introduction

Families cope better when structures are in place and clearly defined. This guide will walk you through how to establish rules and guidelines within your family, which will create a secure foundation going forward. The recommendations included in this book are time limited – six to twelve months. The rules outlined here can lighten as trust with your teen builds.

As parents, you may disagree with some of our suggestions. Our role is to advise you about the types of structures that have been successful for families in recovery. This handbook outlines family “Best Practices” – the types of structures that will not only help contain each family member, but also provide reassurance to your teen that somebody is in charge. Remember, your teen is not in charge. You are the grownups. This is your blueprint to get started on your new path as a recovering family.



Part Two

Clean Home

Your teen needs a safe, sober environment to live in. We ask that you have a “clean home” for your teen. This means no alcohol or drugs are stored or used at home. If you drink, do so outside of the house.

Meals

Meals are a time for nourishment and family connection. We recommend that all family members eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. We also suggest that you have a minimum of 4 family dinners together per week where parents provide and prepare all meals. Also, NO TECHNOLOGY at the dinner table.

Calendar

Having a family calendar is a good idea because it provides structure and reassurance for all family members. Remember that everybody will know where everybody is, just like if you were all at camp. Perhaps you can hang a large calendar in your kitchen for everyone to write their weekly activities on. Or, you can generate a calendar on your computer and put it on the refrigerator. Have fun with it!

Family Meeting

Family meetings are held weekly at the same time. Sunday evenings are a good choice as it marks the beginning and the end of the week. This is a time for all family members to meet and discuss one positive recovery moment that happened during the week.

No Blame Zone

Recovery is a time for new growth. You now know that everybody in your family has suffered from the disease of addiction, and there is nobody to blame. If you are having “blame feelings” (anger, resentment, extreme frustration) bring them up with a therapist. We recommend family and individual therapy when possible.

Part Three

Social Media

Ideally, your teen will not participate in any social networking. Social media can be an addiction and we want your teen to have the best chance at recovery. It is very difficult for teens to refrain from social media and/or use it responsibly. This is why we recommend total abstinence in the beginning. It simply makes being in recovery easier.

The Tech Room

We know that technology is a part of life and that it can be very useful. As part of recovery planning, we want you to create a sense of security regarding technology in the home. This is done by having all usage occur in the open. Pick a place in the house with no closed doors and designate it, "The Tech Room." Also, think about putting time limits on tech use and possibly blocking access to social networking sites. You may find that your teen will resist this structure the most. Remember, that you are the grownups, and everyone in the family can benefit from these changes.

Phone

A big part of creating a recovery community usually involves having a phone. Recovering people often call one another for ongoing support and in times of need. Consider that your teen will benefit from having a phone and if necessary, you can create specific rules and limits. One idea might include a phone with no internet access. Rules and limits should always be agreed upon by the parents and communicated to your teen.

Part Four

Curfew

We strongly recommend a curfew for all teens including non-minors. For the older teens, this can be called the “House Curfew” as this title will resonate more with 18-19 year olds. It is best practice to pick one same curfew and stick to it. Or you can have one set time for weekdays and another set time for weekends. A consistent curfew helps relieve anxiety and tension in the home, and reassures family members that there is structure.

Driving

If you decide that your teen will have his or her own car, then make clear guidelines regarding the car. This means you will address issues like who pays for car insurance and gas. If you decide that your teen will not have his or her own car, discuss plans regarding borrowing a family car or needing to get rides. If your teen is going to share a car with you, let him know when he can and cannot borrow the car. This can be a part of your family calendars. If your teen will have no access to driving a car, let her know when you are available to drive her places. We want your teen and all family members to know exactly what to expect regarding cars and driving so this is not a constant source of confusion and tension.

Sleepovers

We recommend sticking to a time-limited rule of no overnights for your teen. Your teen can have friends stay the night at your house when you are home. As you build trust with your teen, you can decide to make changes to this rule.

Dating

The solution to any concerns around dating is to follow the structures outlined in this book. If your teen has a curfew, no sleepovers, and is not allowed to be with his partner behind closed doors – then, you are keeping to our guidelines. Each family may address this differently based on the circumstances.

Vacations

Family vacations can be a fun way to re-connect and bond. We suggest “dry” vacations, which means that no family members drink. The structures, rules, and limits still apply. Many recovering families have enjoyed taking a “no technology” camping or beach trip with each other. If your teen asks to accompany another family or friends on vacation, refer to our sleepover recommendations.

Friends

New recovery friends are encouraged. Friends who are also sober and attending 12-step meetings are a good idea. Friends from the past who may not be sober can come over to your house and visit your teen when you are home if you are comfortable with this. Your teen will grow to appreciate these guidelines because it can help him or her cope with peer pressures.

Part Five

Drug testing

Whether you drug test or not depends on many factors. You will have to decide with the help of a professional what is best for your family. Generally speaking, we know that drug testing will offer the most protection for the structure of your family. It will also assist your teen if he or she is faced with peer pressure surrounding drugs and alcohol as he or she can say, "No, I can't drink/use because I am being drug tested." Our global recommendation is that drug testing is a good idea as it helps you stack your deck in the most favorable way. Each family will need its own individual plan. We suggest that you seek consultation for this.

Frequency and Duration

When, where, and how often drug testing should occur requires a plan with the help of a professional. Generally, it works well to test more often in the beginning and decrease as trust increases.

Part Six

Your Teen and 12-step

Your teen will be attending 12-step meetings such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA). Your teen will have a sponsor with whom he or she will be working the 12 steps of recovery. Your teen will have new friends from his meetings who are part of his recovery community. We want to see your teen attach to her meetings, sponsor, and support members as this is her foundation for recovery.

Family Members and 12-step

We recommend Al-Anon for parents and Alateen for any adolescent siblings. If family members do not build their own recovery communities, you will operate in a vacuum. You need support! You will find other parents at the meetings who can help answer your questions and you will find people who can relate to how you are feeling. You are a recovering family now and you need your own support systems.

Relapse

Relapse is not an automatic part of recovery as some people are led to believe. It happens. It is somewhat common, but it is not something we build into any recovery plan. Sobriety in recovery is abstinence from all mind and mood-altering substances. If your teen has a relapse, seek guidance from a professional.

Part Seven

If your teen is not returning home post-treatment, or will only be there for a short time, we have a few suggestions. When your teen is home – even if only for a short time, or for visits – your family structures still apply. Wherever your teen is, he or she should find a recovery community. A Sober Living Environment (SLE) is a good idea if your teen will attend college or live on his or her own. Parents: still build your own recovery community! You are a recovering family and you each need your own support systems. Consider weekly family meetings via Skype, Face Time, or the phone (refer to the Family Meeting section for specifics). Having your teen away from the home will be challenging. Please seek consultation to address these challenges.

Books and Resources

Recommended Reading

1. **The Family Recovery Guide: A Map for Healthy Growth**
by Stephanie Brown
2. **The Alcoholic Family in Recovery: A Developmental Model**
by Stephanie Brown
3. **Facing Codependence: What it is, Where it Comes From, How it Sabotages Our Lives** by Pia Mellody
4. **The Lost Years: Surviving a Mother and Daughter's Worst Nightmare** by Kristina Wandzilak
5. **Family Recovery: Growing Beyond Addiction** by Terence T. Gorski

12-Step Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous in Marin and San Francisco County

415-499-0400 (Marin) **415-674-1821** (SF)

Website: aasf.org

Alcoholics Anonymous in Sonoma County

707-544-1300 (Santa Rosa) **707-938-8508** (Sonoma)

Website: sonomacountyaa.org

Narcotics Anonymous World Services

Website: na.org

Al-Anon and Alateen in Marin County

Website: marinalanon.org

Al-Anon and Alateen in San Francisco County

Website: al-anonsf.org

Al-Anon and Alateen in Sonoma County

Website: ncwsa.org

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